



**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN OPENNESS TO EXPERIENCE,
CONSCIENTIOUSNESS AND OPTIMISM IN STUDENTS'
ACADEMIC WORK AMONG SENIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL
STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITY DEMONSTRATION
SECONDARY SCHOOL UDSS-UNIPORT RIVERS STATE**

R. O. Ekechukwu¹, Nwineke Chimela F.²

¹Dr., Department of Educational Psychology Guidance and Counselling,
Faculty of Education, University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

²Demonstration Secondary School UDSS – Uniport,
University of Port Harcourt, Nigeria

Abstract:

This study investigated the relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness and optimism in students' academic work among senior secondary school student in university Demonstration Secondary School UDSS – Uniport. Openness to experience and conscientiousness were the independent variables while optimism in students' academic work was the dependent variable two research questions and two corresponding hypotheses guided the study. Correlational research design was adopted. A sample of four hundred 400 students was drawn from the population using simple random sampling techniques. Data was collected using two instruments namely. Personality Traits Assessment Scale (PTAS) and optimism in Students Academic Work Assessment Scale (OSAWAS) multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment Correlation were used to answer the research question while ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study found that openness to experience and conscientiousness had showed a positive significant relationship with optimism in students' academic work. Based on the findings, appropriate recommendations were made.

Keywords: personality traits (openness to experience, and conscientiousness) optimism and students' academic

Introduction

The world is changing as knowledge increases. People also tend to change with the world by way of changing and learning to be optimistic in the way they view events and things around them. Optimism as a psychological construct is a feeling that good things will happen and then something will be successful. Researches have shown that children are more optimistic than adult, they continue in this manner as they grow and become adapted to the situation which will automatically result to an optimistic adult Stephanie (2013).

The benefits of an optimistic outlook are many; optimists are higher achievers and have better overall health; they believe bad events to be more temporary than permanent and bounce back quickly from failure, they are also of the view that good things happen for reasons that are permanent and they compartmentalize helplessness.

According to Seligman cited in Ahed, Zohair and Omar (2013) "The mechanism responsible for acquiring optimism is embedded in the thinking style practice by the individual in facing the annoying and pleasing situation". This is also termed as the "Optimistic interpretative method". Seligman further defined optimism as "how people interpret themselves in cases of successes and failure".

Seligman (1990) optimists see failure as due to some changeable thing, so as to be able to succeed in the next time. Everybody especially adolescents pass through defeat, rejection and failure to a certain extent through his/her life in general and their academic work in particular.

In spite of the failure and rejection people (adolescent) encounter in their lives, some seek to overcome this failure and rejection while others yield to failure/discouragement. This could be as a result of the type of personality traits possessed by each individual.

Thus, the way people substantially interpret their defeats and failure makes the difference among them (Walker and Brokow, 2000). In addition, Seligman note in his research work on optimism and pessimism that optimists are superior to the pessimists in their ability to face depression. Accordingly, the optimists are goal achievers in their academic, and mostly physically healthy (Seligman, 2003).

It is worthy to mention here that openness to experience and conscientiousness as personality traits correlate with optimism because optimism is a personality trait. Therefore, a personality is a durable disposition to behave in a particular way in a variety of situation. Weiten (2007) adjectives such as friendly, anxious, moody, honest

openness, optimistic, pessimistic, neurotic, introvert extrovert, domineering, extravagant etc. are personality traits.

Openness to experience and conscientiousness were among the Big Five-Factor Model (FFM) personality traits propounded by Robert McCrae and Paul Costa (1992, 1997, 1999 and 2003) which is the main focus of this study.

Openness to Experience

Openness is a general appreciation of art, emotion, adventure, usual ideas, imagination, curiosity and variety of experience. People who are open to experience are intellectually curious, open to emotion, sensitive to beauty and willing to try new things. The above qualities or traits are also applicable to optimistic people. They tend to be more creative and more aware of their feelings. They are also more likely to hold unconventional beliefs.

A particular individual, however, may have a high overall openness score and be interested in learning and exploring new cultures but have no great interest in art or poetry. There is a strong connection between liberal ethics and openness to experience such as support for policies endorsing racial tolerance Boileau (2008). Another characteristic of the open cognitive style is a facility for thinking in symbols and abstractions for renewal from concrete experience.

On the other hand, people who score low in openness are just the opposite. They prefer to stuck to their habits, avoid new experiences and probably arrant the most adventurous changing personality is usually considered a tough process thus they are pessimistic, but openness is a personality trait that has been shown to be subject to change in adulthood.

As reported by Stephanie, people who took psilocybin or hallucinogenic "Magic Mushrooms" become more open after the experience. The effect hasted at least a year, suggesting that it might be permanent. Stephanie (2013) speaking of experimental drug use California's try anything culture is no myth. A study of personality traits across the United States released in 2012 found that openness is most prevalent in the West Coast.

Conscientiousness and Optimism

Conscientiousness is a tendency to show self-discipline, act dutifully, and aim for achievement against measure or outside expectations. It is related to the way in which people control, regulate and direct their impulses. High scores on conscientiousness

indicate a preference for planned rather than spontaneous behaviour. Costa and McCrae (1992) research reports on science from Michigan State University indicate that the average level of conscientiousness rises among young adults and then decline among older adults (Retrieved 4 April, 2012).

People who are conscientious are organized and have a strong sense of duty. They are dependable, disciplined and achievement focused, they are planners. On the other hand, people who are low in conscientiousness are more spontaneous freewheeling, they tend towards carelessness. Conscientiousness is a helpful personality trait to have as it has been linked to achievement in school and on job.

According to Costa and McCrae (1991) cited in Bruck and Allen (2003), the basis of this trait is within individual differences among planning, organized and carrying out tasks. More specifically, the individual who score high on this is purposeful determined punctual, and reliable, organized strong willed and usually attains academic or organizational success.

In contrast, an individual who is low on conscientiousness is lackadaisical in working toward his/her goals; careless and unreliable, conscientiousness has been consistently related to performance across variety of jobs (Barrick and Mount 1991, Salgado 1997, Bruck and Allen 2003) and to life satisfaction (Deneve and Cooper 1998). Researches have also shown that conscientiousness moderates the impact of role clarity and ambiguity on individual wellbeing (Miller, Griffin and Hart, 1999). That is, role ambiguity in the work environment has less of a detrimental effect on the wellbeing of more conscientious individuals.

Statement of the Problem

The university of Port Harcourt Demonstration Senior Secondary School students also possess some level of openness to experience and conscientiousness personality traits. These traits possessed by each individual determine how they interpret events, in terms of success and failure they encounter in the course of their studies. Some of them are optimistic while some are not optimistic in the way they interpret success and/or failure in relation to their academic work. This is the rationale behind choosing this topic for investigation.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between openness to experience conscientiousness and optimism in students' academic work in case study of University of Port Harcourt Demonstration Secondary School (Uniport - UDSS) Rivers State.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the students especially those that are optimistic in their academic work and those with low optimism in their academic work. The study will also expose the teachers to the several reasons for low optimism in academic and how they can be of help to the students. The study will also have great impact on the school and the school counsellors on how to change the attitude of the students who are pessimistic and those with low, optimism.

Research Questions

- 1) *What is the relationship between openness to experience and optimism in students' academic work?*
- 2) *What is the relationship between conscientiousness and optimism in students' academic work?*

Hypotheses

- 1) There is no significant relationship between openness to experience and optimism in students' academic work.
- 2) There is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and optimism in students' academic work.

Method

The research design used for this study was correlational design; the population comprised all senior secondary school students in UDSS – Uniport. The sample size for this study is 400 senior secondary schools students. Sample random sampling technique was used.

Two instruments titled: "Personality Traits Assessment Scale" (PTAS) and "Optimism in students Academic Work Assessment Scale" (OSAWAS) were used to collect data from the senior secondary school students. The two instruments were validated in terms of content and face validity by two test experts in the department of Educational Psychology Guidance and Counselling University of Port Harcourt. The reliability of the instruments (PTAS) and (OSAWAS) were determined through test-retest method.

The reliability coefficients obtained were 0.99 for (PTAS) and 0.89 for (OSAWAS) respectively which means that the instruments are reliable for the study. Multiple regression and Pearson Product Moment correlation were used to answer the research questions while ANOVA and t-test associated with multiple regression were used to test the null hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance.

Results

Analysis of data in this study was done in line with the research questions and hypotheses.

Research Question One: *What is the Relationship between Openness to Experience and Optimism Students' Academic Work?*

Table 1: Summary of Pearson Product Moment Analysis of the Relationship between Openness to Experience and Optimism in students' Academic Work

Variables	N	Mean \bar{X}	SD	r-crit	P-Value
Openness to experience	400	16.93	3.19	0.290	0.559
Optimism	400	77.94	14.45		

The results in Table 1.1 show that when openness to experience was correlated with optimism, an r-value of 0.290 and a P-value of was obtained. This shows a high positive relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis One: There is no significant relationship between openness to experience and optimism in students' academic work.

Table 2: Summary of Beta value and t-test analysis showing the relative contribution of openness to experience on optimism in students' academic work

Model	Under Standardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
(Constant)	71.493	7.070		10.112	.000
Openness to experience	0.435	0.197	0.111	2.204	0.028

The result in the table above revealed that the beta value for openness to experience was 0.111; t-value was 2.204, significant at 0.028 which is less than the chosen level of significance (0.05). Therefore hypothesis 1 (no significant relationship between openness to experience and optimism in students' academic work) was rejected. This implies that there is a relationship between openness to experience and optimism in students' academic work.

Research Question Two: *What is the Relationship between Conscientiousness and Optimism in Students' Academic Work?*

Table 3: Summary of the Correlation Analysis between Conscientiousness and Optimism in Students' Academic Work

Variables	N	Mean \bar{X}	SD	r-crit	P-Value
Conscientiousness	400	16.59	3.32	0.007	0.89
Optimism	400	77.94	14.45		

The table above reveals that conscientiousness when correlated with optimism in students' academic work, gave rise to an r-value of 0.007 and a p-value of 0.89. This indicates a low positive relationship between the two variables.

Hypothesis Two: There is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and optimism in student's academic work.

Table 4: Summary of Beta value and t-test analysis showing the relative contributes of conscientiousness on optimism in students' academic work

Model	Under Standardized Coefficients		Standard Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Standard Error	Beta		
(Constant)	71.493	7.070		10.112	.000
Conscientiousness	0.014	.219	.003	.063	.950

The beta value for conscientiousness was 0.003, t-value was 0.063, significant at 0.950, which is greater than the chosen level of probability (0.05). Therefore hypothesis 2 (no significant relationship between conscientiousness and optimism in students' academic work) was accepted.

Discussion of Findings

Openness to Experience and Optimism in Student Academic Work

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research question while t-test associated with multiple regression was adopted to test the null hypothesis. The result obtained indicated that openness to experience had a high positive relationship with optimism in academic work. Hypothesis testing revealed a significant relationship between openness to experience and optimism in students' academic work. This means that students who possess the personality trait of openness will very likely exhibit optimism in their academic work. This result is in line with the works of Stephanie (2013) and Costa and McCrae (1991). Their study revealed that individuals who possessed the trait of openness to experience have intellectual curiosity, imagination, adventure, preference for variety and independence of judgement.

Conscientiousness and Optimism in Student's Academic Work

Pearson Product Moment Correlation was used to answer the research question while t-test associated with multiple regression was used to test the null hypothesis. Results obtained indicated that conscientiousness had a low positive relationship with optimism in student's academic work, which was found to be insignificant upon hypothesis testing. This means that when taken independently, conscientiousness showed no significant relationship with optimism in students' academic work. The finding of this study agreed with the works of Bruck and Allen (2003). They reported in their studies that the basis of this trait is within individual difference among planning, organizing and carrying out tasks, more specifically, the individual who score high on

this trait in purposeful, determine, punctual, reliable and usually attains academic or organizational success.

Recommendations

The following recommendations were made based on the findings of the study: there is need for professional guidance counsellors in all secondary schools in order to assist these students channel their potentials to a productive life and help them to be more optimistic in life generally and in this academic particularly.

Conclusion

This study was aimed at determining the relationship between openness to experience, conscientiousness and optimism in students' academic work among senior secondary school students: A case study of University Demonstration Secondary School (UDSS – Uniport). The study showed that there is a high positive relationship between openness to experience and optimism in student academic work and there is no significant relationship between conscientiousness and optimism in student's academic work among UDSS – Uniport students.

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